

Pinnacles National Monument Transportation Study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Purpose of the Study

The National Park Service (NPS) is studying transportation alternatives for Pinnacles National Monument. The study is a necessary response to recent and ongoing changes at the park including expanded operational facilities, limitations on visitor parking, and improved resource and visitor use management. Transportation and access issues include insufficient parking capacity, below standard parking areas within and outside the park, and operational problems with the intermittent van shuttle system.

Flood damage in the late 1990's seriously reduced the quantity of parking available in the park. Although approximately 225 to 250 parking spaces are needed to adequately serve visitors, only about 150 parking spaces remain inside the park, and about one third of these are considered to be temporary, overflow spaces.

Seeking Public Comments on Preliminary Alternatives

NPS is seeking public comments on four preliminary alternatives that address parking management and transportation system improvements in the East District:

- Alternative A - No Shuttle Service/ Year-round Parking
- Alternative B - "Shuttle Only" Access and No Parking on Peak Days
- Alternative C - Shuttle with Parking Retained on Peak Days
- Alternative D - No Action

Please submit your comments prior to March 31, 2004. Refer to the back page of this newsletter for information about how to submit your comments.



Existing Pinnacles National Monument Shuttle

The study will address these factors as well as future conditions, such as the potential acquisition of the Pinnacles Ranch (outside the east entrance), adjustments to the park trail system, and rapid suburbanization of the surrounding communities, which is changing visitor use characteristics. Visitors from the San Francisco Bay and Monterey areas are the most frequent users of the park, contributing to substantial visitation peaks on weekends in spring and fall.

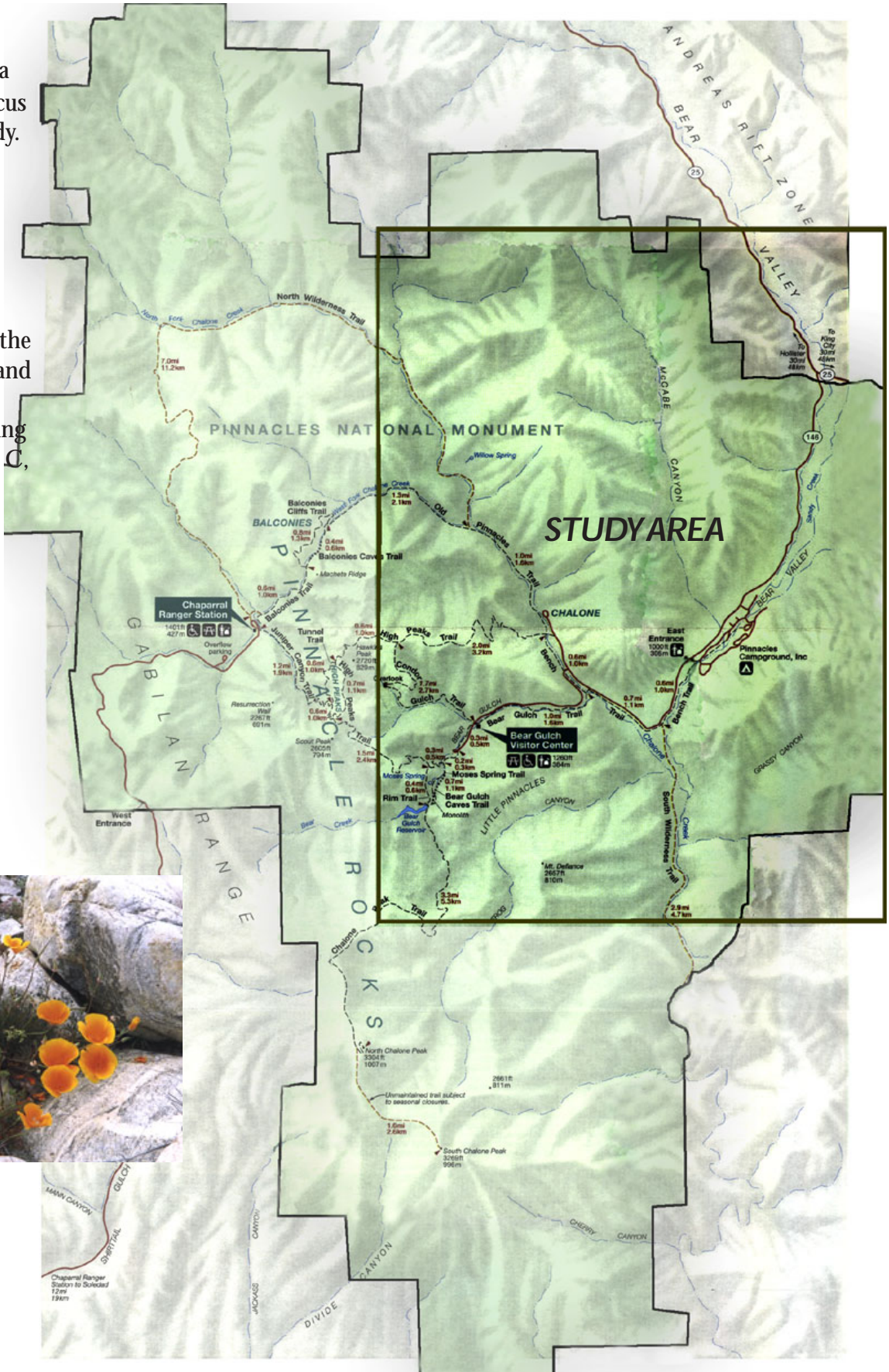
The Study Includes Three Major Components:

- Visitor and Vehicular Data Collection and Demand Analysis (already completed)
- Parking Management Recommendations for the East District; and
- Transportation System Recommendations for the East District.

The study will provide short and long-term strategies to address visitor needs, resource protection, and regional trends affecting visitation. The information in the transportation study will eventually be integrated into the new general management plan (GMP) being developed for the park. Environmental analysis in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act will be completed as part of the GMP.

Study Area

This map depicts the area of the park that is the focus of the transportation study. Preliminary draft alternatives have been developed for parking management and improvements, as well as other transportation solutions for this area of the park - the East District, and are illustrated in this newsletter on the following pages (Alternatives A, B, C, and D).



Alternative A – No Shuttle Service/Year-round Parking

Alternative A focuses on improving parking and visitor management through physical improvements to parking areas, additional visitor orientation, signing and pavement striping. A new parking area would be developed in the Chamise area. No shuttle service would be provided.

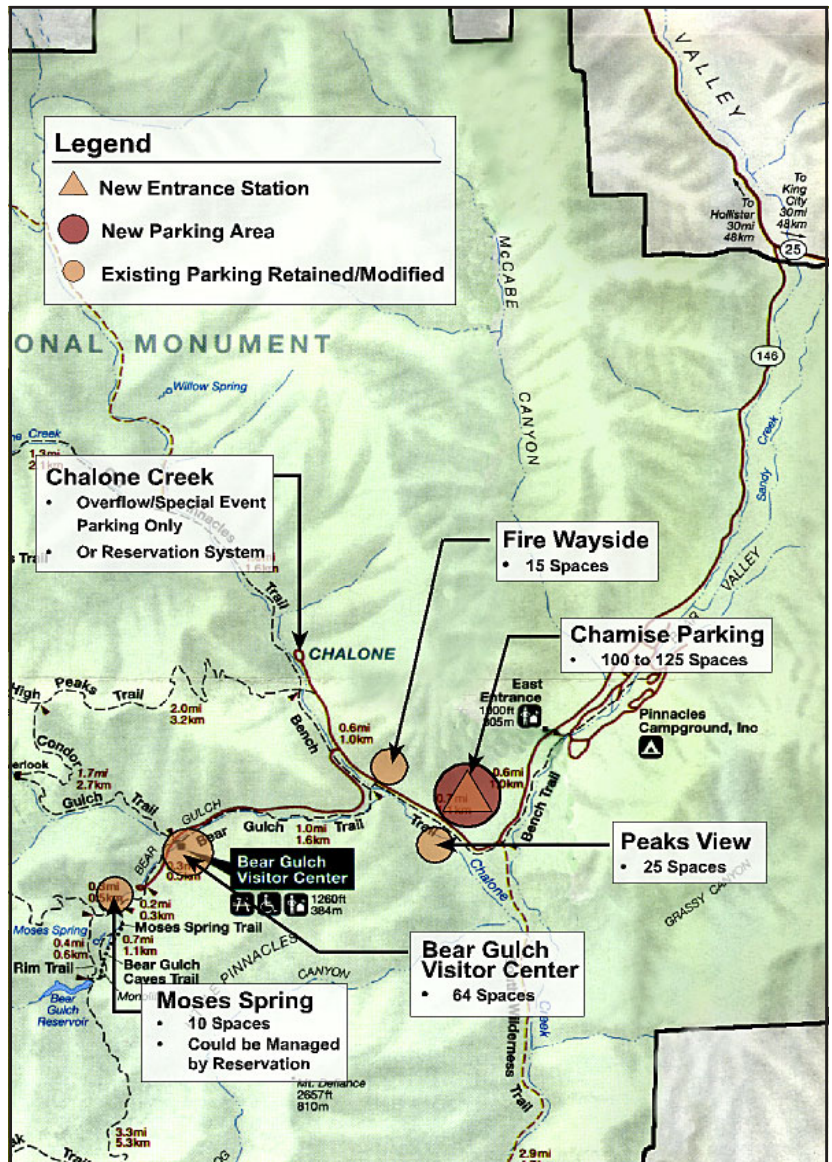
Alternative A Components

- Preserved and improved parking to better direct visitors;
- Reconfiguration and striping of parking at Peaks View, Fire Wayside, Bear Gulch Visitor Center, and Moses Spring;
- Visitor information kiosks, signs, and interpretive exhibits at parking areas;
- Expanded information about recreation opportunities to help disperse visitors and reduce park congestion;
- New parking in the Chamise area to expand parking opportunities in the park and enhance trail access to South Wilderness and Peaks View;
- Visitor entrance station retained in the current location or relocated in proximity to the new parking area;
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technology, such as traffic sensors and communications systems, to reduce staff time (“self-service” parking emphasis) and inform visitors about parking availability prior to/upon arrival;
- Time-limited parking in certain areas (Bear Gulch Visitor Center); and
- Potential reservation system for major attraction sites/premier parking areas on peak visitation days.

Potential Results of Alternative A

- Parking areas would operate more efficiently, but would still need to be monitored regularly by staff;
- Improved wayfinding, on-site trip planning information, and signage at parking areas;

Alternative A No Shuttle/ Year-round Parking in Park



- More advance trip planning and en-route visitor orientation would be needed, and there would be more parking management emphasis than Alternatives B or C;
- Lower capital costs than Alternatives B or C, but more staff time needed to manage parking and reservations during peak season;
- More localized visitor experiences at the park with less vehicle mobility between sites – parking may fill during peak times, and some visitors may not be able to access their intended trailheads; and
- Less opportunity to remove parking areas and restore/enhance resource areas in the park than under Alternative B.

Study Process

Activity:	Timeframe:
Data collection and transportation demand analysis	Completed Spring & Fall 2003
Work session and issues analysis by Park staff and consultant team to identify potential alternatives for parking management and transportation system improvements	December 2003
Newsletter illustrating preliminary draft alternatives published for public review and comment	March 2004 (Comments Due March 31, 2004)
Draft Transportation Study Completed	End of April 2004
Final Transportation Study Completed	End of May 2004

Alternative B – “Shuttle Only” Access and No Parking on Peak Days

Alternative B would provide shuttle service with no parking of visitor vehicles in the park on peak days during the spring and fall (approximately 18 weekends per year). A shuttle system would provide visitors more mobility in the park during the most congested times. Parking areas within the park would be open to visitor vehicles during the off seasons. Less overall year-round parking would be needed.

Alternative B Components

- Shuttle system carrying approximately 750 visitors/day during peak visitation;
- Shuttling would allow visitors more choice about where to go (compared to vehicular access, which limits visitors to only locations where parking is available);
- More one-way hiking opportunities in the park – visitors can be dropped off at a preferred site and picked up where that route ends;
- Removal of some parking areas (permanent and temporary) since less parking would be needed;
- No parking in the park on peak visitation days (primarily weekends), permits could be provided for the Bear Gulch area for special events and other purposes;
- A series of parking lots connected by pathways developed near the entrance (such as at Pinnacles Ranch campground if acquired, and on park land in that vicinity, such as “The Bench” east of the park road), providing approximately 175 to 200 parking spaces;
- Extension of the park trail network in the park to the new parking areas;
- Relocation of the visitor entrance station to the new entrance parking area as the new visitor arrival point and shuttle boarding area;
- Orientation/wayfinding signs at new entrance parking areas and trailheads/shuttle stops;
- Future shuttle service to Pinnacles Ranch

destinations (if acquired) from the new visitor contact station/shuttle hub; and

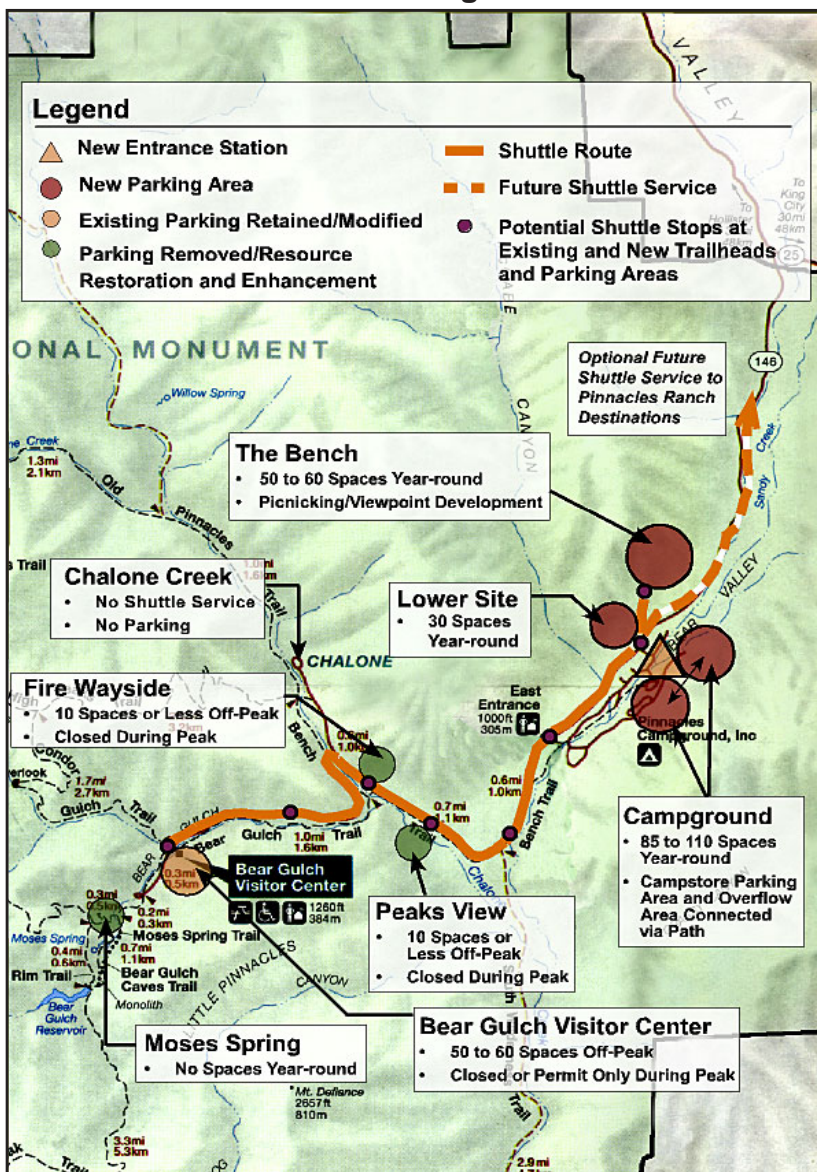
- Improved parking areas for more efficient off-season use.

Potential Results of Alternative B

- Removal or size reduction of parking areas provides opportunities for environmental restoration/enhancement (at locations such as Moses Spring, Fire Wayside, Peaks View, and Chalone Creek);
- Less parking and vehicular circulation in the park would enhance the tranquility of the visitor experience

Alternative B

Peak Season Shuttle/No Parking in Park



and reduce environmental impacts;

- Locating parking in multiple, smaller parking areas near the entrance would minimize visual and environmental impacts compared to a single large parking area;
- Less emphasis on communications technology (ITS) and less advance trip planning would be needed under this alternative than under A;
- More on-site wayfinding/orientation needed than under Alternative A;
- More capital funding needed than Alternative A, but similar level of funding as C.
- Considerably less staff time would need to be devoted to transportation within the park than under current conditions or Alternative A; and
- Lends to expanded recreational opportunities on new lands (the Francis and Pinnacles ranches).



Alternative B includes removal or size reduction of certain parking areas.

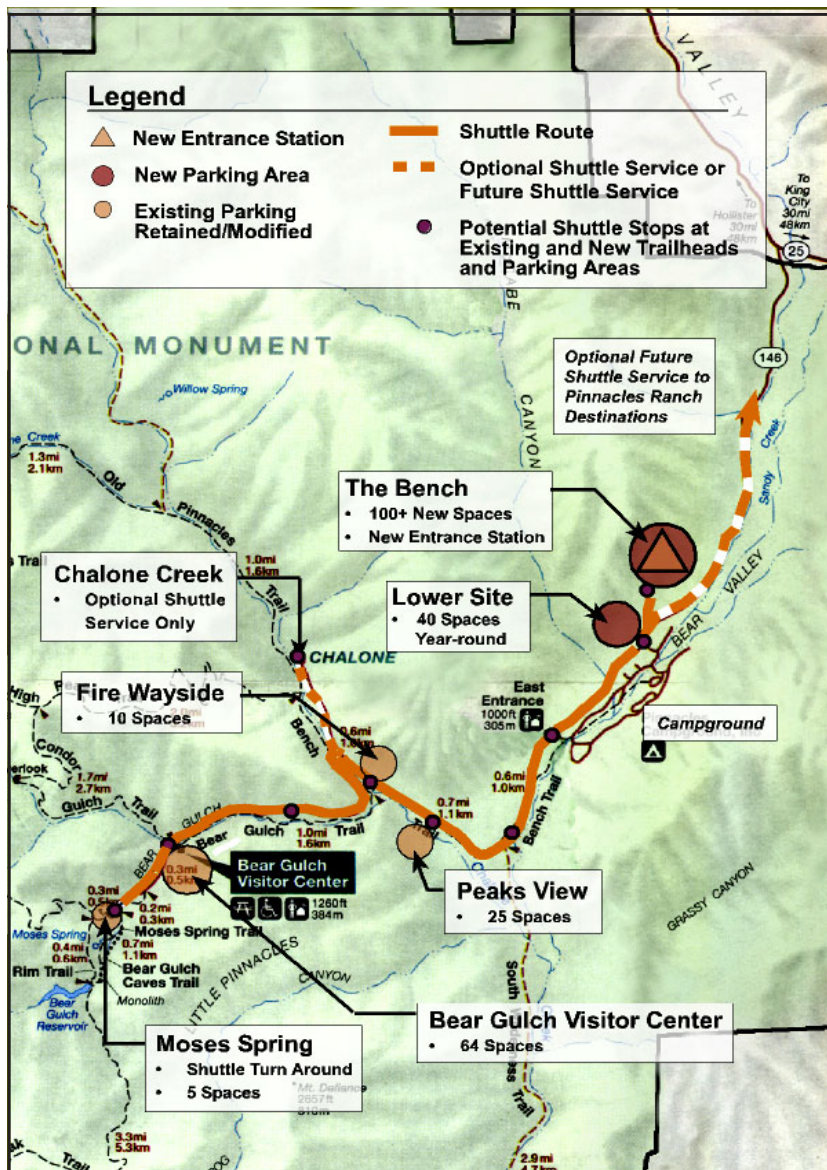
Alternative C – Shuttle Service with Parking Retained on Peak Days

Alternative C focuses on the provision of shuttle service while also maintaining parking and vehicle access within the park on peak days (approximately 18 weekends per year).

Alternative C Components

- Shuttle system carrying approximately 750 visitors/day during peak visitation;

Alternative C Parking and Peak Season Shuttle in Park



- Shuttling provides same opportunities listed under Alternative B related to visitor choice/mobility and one-way hiking opportunities in the park;
- A new entrance parking lot at either “The Bench,” east of the campground or Pinnacles Ranch Campground, if acquired - approximately 150 spaces would be needed here to supplement parking in the park;
- Relocated visitor entrance station to the new major parking area as the visitor arrival point and shuttle boarding area;
- Orientation and wayfinding signs at new entrance lot, improved parking areas, and trailheads/shuttle stops;
- Optional shuttle service up Chalone Creek Road (visitor access limited to shuttle only would minimize conflicts in this area); and
- Future shuttle service to Pinnacles Ranch destinations (if acquired) from the new visitor contact station/shuttle hub.

Potential Results of Alternative C

- Visitors would be able to drive into the park until parking lots fill, but operation of shuttle service and visitor vehicle access on peak days would create more overall congestion than under Alternative B.
- More staff would be needed than under Alternatives A or B to monitor and manage visitor access and parking and to operate the shuttle system, even with addition of communications technology.
- More emphasis on communications technology and parking management needed than under A or B;
- Less advance trip planning and en-route wayfinding needed;
- Less opportunity for resource enhancement and restoration than Alternative B;

- More capital funding than Alternative A and a similar level of capital funding as B; but more annual maintenance and operations funding and staffing than A or B; and
- Lends to expanded recreational opportunities on new lands (the Francis and Pinnacles ranches).

Alternative D – No Action

Alternative D would involve no change or improvements to current transportation functions in the park. This “No Action” alternative provides the opportunity to analyze current problems and challenges related to temporary parking management measures, the ad-hoc shuttle service, visitor access and orientation, and the implications of not making any improvements to these facilities and services. The current lack of sufficient parking and the management-intensive shuttle system require extensive staff time. If no changes are made, staff time will continue to be drawn more toward managing parking and access rather than other important duties, such as providing visitor information and interpretation, and managing resources.



Scenic views at Pinnacles

For More Information

If you have questions or would like more information about the transportation study, you can contact

Karen Dennis

(831) 389-4485 ext. 260 or e-mail

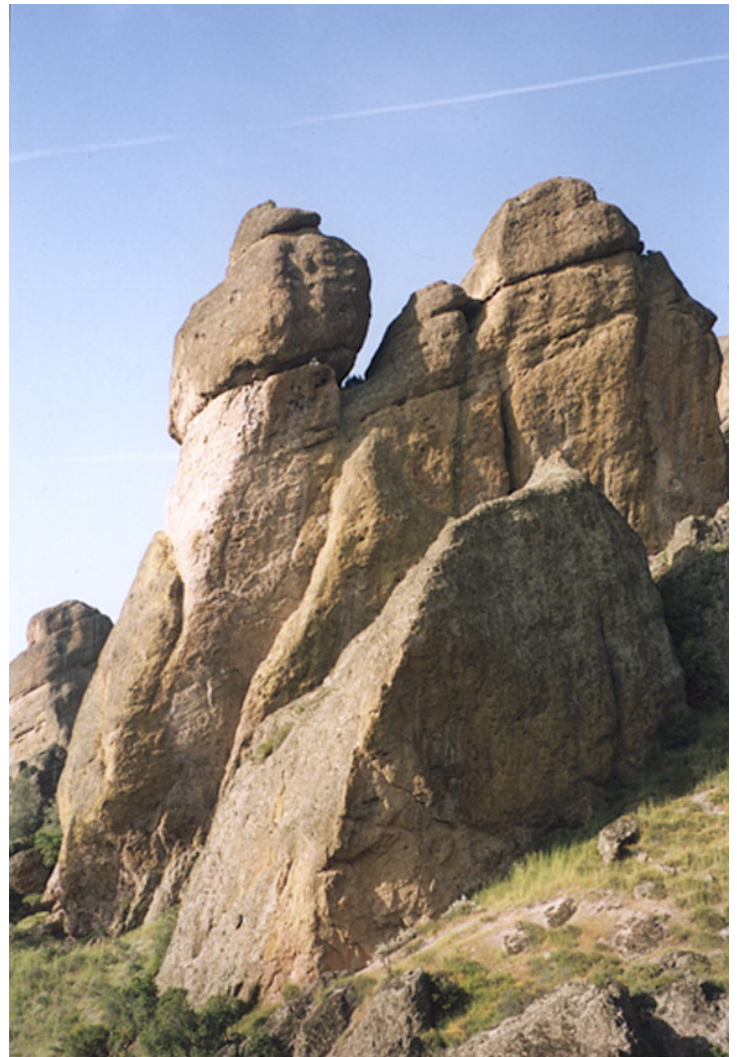
karen_m_dennis@nps.gov

or

Mark Tabor

(303) 969-2493 or e-mail

mark_tabor@nps.gov



Mailing Address

5000 Hwy. 146
Paicines, CA 95043



For More Information

If you have questions or would like more information about the transportation study, you can contact Karen Dennis (831) 389-4485 ext. 260 or e-mail karen_m_dennis@nps.gov or Mark Tabor at (303) 969-2493 or e-mail mark_tabor@nps.gov

Please Provide Your Comments on These Alternatives

There are two ways for you to provide your comments on the transportation alternatives.

You can either log on to the park's website and provide comments there [**www.nps.gov/pinn**](http://www.nps.gov/pinn).

Or you can write your comments on this sheet
and mail them to:

Pinnacles National Monument
Attention: Karen Dennis
5000 Highway 146
Paicines, CA 95043

Write Comments Here: _____

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Be sure to submit your comments by March 31, 2004!